TO: Jornal News Editorial Page

FROM: Rita J. Louie
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RE: Pomona Rabbinical College not a "Natural" progression

We have to take great exception to Mr. Savad's statement in the Journal News that the Rabbinical College plans for the Village of Pomona was a "natural progression" and that the character of the village is "Changingevolving from country to more diverse development because of the people living here and the people moving here".

The Village of Pomona is a quiet, semi-rural, community based village that has stood the test of time since before the Revolutionary war War and remains the same today in spirit and pretty much the same in physical appearance. Some new developments of single-family homes have been built in recent years, but the Pomona Planning Board has done it'ssits utmost to ensure village codes are followed and that those developments would not infringe greatly on the character or nature of the Village.

To say that a virtual mini-city within the village, that will house thousands of homogenous individuals, is "natural" in any way is simply not true. The so-called natural progression of the religious community on Route 306 was also not a natural occurrence. Friends of ours have told stories of being intimidated and virtually forced to move to make way for this "natural progression". Homeowners are being offered far more than their properties are worth to move, which, while not illegal, certainly stinks of unethical. As we speak, Realtors and the developer and his realtors are practicing borderline redlining and blockbusting techniques along the 306/202 corridor so that this "natural progression" can take place. Already since the 100-acre site was purchased in 2005, an additional 10 properties have been bought by the developer bringing the total acreage to 130 acres. Why is it necessary to clear the path of homeowners that have lived here for years, raising their families and putting their heart and soul into their homes and the community? Why the outright discrimination against these homeowners? Is it because in this day and age, the best way to profit in real estate is to buy property that is zoned single-family and then bypass zoning laws that apply to everyone else and bring in large building projects? There is nothing natural, ethical or pious about what the developer is trying to do's going on in Pomona right now. It's developers' greed and arrogance, armed with the abuse of a well-intended RLUIPA law.

The Village of Pomona is a model of cultural, religious and racial diversity within a close knit community of people who deserve equal application of zoning laws and it must stay that way for generations to come.
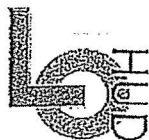
Rita Louie
Brett Yagel

Candidates for Trustee running under the Village Community Party for the Village of Pomona elections on March 20th.

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Pomona rabbinical college not a "natural" progression

By Lynn Yagel
(Original Publication: February 1, 2007)

I have to take great exception to attorney Paul Savad's statement in the Jan. 12 Journal News ("Pomona to get rabbinical college plan") that a rabbinical college in Pomona was a "natural progression" and that the character of the village is "evolving from country to more diverse development because of the people living here and the people moving here." While I understand he is being paid by his client to make such statements, and he himself is in the business of land development, I happen to live in the Village of Pomona.

The Village of Pomona is a quiet, semi-rural, community-based village. In recent years there have been some new developments of single-family homes, but the Pomona Planning Board has done its utmost to ensure village codes are followed and that those developments would not infringe greatly on the character or nature of the village.

To say that a virtual mini-city within the village - that will house thousands of homogenous individuals who can control village elections - is "natural" in any way is simply not true. Friends of ours have relayed instances of being intimidated and virtually forced to move to make way for this "natural progression." Since the 100-acre site was purchased in 2005, an additional 10 properties have already been bought along Route 306 by the developer, bringing the total acreage to 130. Why is it necessary to clear the path of homeowners in the surrounding areas who have lived here for years, raising their families, paying their taxes, and putting their heart and soul into their homes and the community? Is the best way to profit in real estate to buy property that is zoned single-family and then bypass/ignore zoning laws that apply to everyone else and bring in larger, more profitable housing projects that come off the tax rolls?

I have read that Mr. Savad says that there is a battle to come in Pomona and that they are very well-financed. Plans have not even been submitted to the village and yet he threatens potential litigation. If his clients are so well-financed, then why not submit plans for responsible development that is in accordance with the zoning? Maybe, there just wouldn't be enough profit if they followed the existing zoning laws.

There is nothing natural, ethical or pious about what the developer is attempting to do in Pomona right now. It is simply indifference, arrogance and greed, armed with the abusive hammer of a well-intended, but flawed, RLUIPA (Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act) law.

The Village of Pomona is a model of cultural, religious and racial diversity within a close-knit community of people who deserve equal application of zoning laws and it must stay that way for generations to come.

The writer is a Pomona resident.

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